



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

Diane Sugimura, Director

**CITY OF SEATTLE
ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Application Number: 3003406
Applicant Name: Seattle School District Number One
Address of Proposal: 1819 N. 135th St., Ingraham High School

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

Development Standard Departure for a Public School to allow replacement of an existing reader board sign with a 9 foot 4 inch wide, 6 foot 1.5 inch high changing image sign on a pole (total height of 24 feet above street level) and to allow the height of fencing around the baseball diamond and right field (along Ashworth Ave. N.) to be increased from 25 feet to 40 feet tall.

The following Development Standard Departures are requested:

Sign

1. To allow a Changing Image sign in a Single Family Zone. - SMC 23.44.020

Fencing

1. To allow a 40 foot tall fence in a Single Family Yard – SMC 23.55.017 (6 ft. is allowed).
2. To allow a 40 foot tall fence in a Single Family Zone – SMC 23.55.014 (maximum height for additions to existing schools is 35 feet).

SEPA DETERMINATION:

Exempt DNS MDNS EIS

DNS with conditions

DNS involving non-exempt grading, or demolition, or another agency with jurisdiction.

BACKGROUND DATA

Site and Vicinity Description

The proposal site is the campus of the existing Ingraham High School in north Seattle bordered by N. 130th St. on the south and by Ashworth Ave. N. on the west. Across Ashworth Ave. N. to the west there is single family zoning and development. N. 130th is a busy arterial street with a character only partly single family due to the long stretch of high school frontage, commercial areas to the west, the four lane arterial nature of the roadway and the high level of traffic on the street.

Proposal Description

The Seattle School District has requested that a 57.17 square foot (6' 1.5" high by 9' 4" wide) internally illuminated, changeable image reader-board sign be installed on an existing pole with an overall height of 17' - 7.5" to the base of the existing pole. The sign would be designed to accommodate a changeable and movable image. It would replace an existing slightly larger reader-board sign installed.

The School District also proposes to increase the height of the existing netting between the baseball field and Ashworth Ave N. from 25' to approximately 40' for a length of 60 feet.

Public Comments

A public meeting of the Development Standard Departure Advisory Committee ("Committee") was held on November 14, 2005 at which public comment was received. Attendance at that meeting was limited and indicated general approval of the proposed sign and fencing. There was considerable discussion regarding the content of the messages which might be placed on the sign. There was general support for messages relating to events at the school or for other broader community based or school related messages. Concern was also expressed that the illuminated nature of the proposed sign might cause light and glare impacts on residences south of N. 130th St. Concern was expressed that private organizations might be allowed to market events at the site with messages on the board. The fence height extension was very favorably received with discussion even considering whether additional fencing could be incorporated.

ANALYSIS - Development Standard Departures

This Development Standard Departure process is being conducted pursuant to the provisions of Seattle Municipal Code sections 23.79.002-.012. Pursuant to these provisions an Advisory Committee was convened, public comment received, and a written recommendation to the Director of DPD made. This analysis and decision is made pursuant to the requirements of SMC section 23.79.010 that the Director determine the amount of departure to be allowed as well as mitigation measures to be imposed. Criteria set forth in the applicable code sections are to be used for both the Committee's recommendation and the Director's decision.

SIGN DEPARTURE

Relationship to the Surrounding Areas:

(1) Appropriateness in relationship to the character and scale of the surrounding area

In reviewing the sign departure request it is acknowledged that the school itself is dramatically different in scale and character to the surrounding neighborhood. Both the schools, and other associated uses, such as the lighted sports fields, are large. Surrounding private development is a much smaller scale. Nonetheless, the sign is in scale to the school and not so large that it would appear to present a major problem to the surrounding area. The full block frontage of the school along N. 130th St., the four lane arterial nature of the roadway, the commercial development a close distance to the west, the distinctly non-residential appearance of the school site and the width of the right-of-way all combine to create a context where the presence of the sign would not be greatly out of character with the scale of the surrounding area.

The lighted faces of the proposed sign would face directly east and west, controlling light and glare impacts to residential properties across N. 130th St. to the south. Views of the sign would be fairly limited given its size, height, and orientation to the traffic on N. 130th St.

Presence of edges, significant setbacks, major arterials, topographic breaks, and similar features which provide a transition in scale – The proposed location along the wide and busy N. 130th St. arterial with hundreds of feet of school property to the east and west goes far to provide a transition in scale from the sign to surrounding structures.

(2) Location and design of structure to reduce the appearance of bulk

The proposed sign is not a very bulky structure having a single pole with a thin, rectangular sign attached to it. There a good deal of height to the proposed sign which would be especially noticeable to a pedestrian in close proximity to it. Given its location, however, most viewing would be from traffic traveling on N 130th St. to and from the nearby Aurora commercial corridor area.

(3) Impacts on housing and open space - These impacts would be expected to be negligible.

(4) Need for Departure:

Message conveying signs in front of both public and private high schools have become an important element in the communication of school's activities. They convey important information to both the school community and to the larger community in the area. They provide a method for the school administration to call attention to specific events or persons, teams, etc. within the school community. They can also be used to convey messages of broader community interest. To function well they need to be well above grade level and be large enough to convey their messages to passing motorists.

Departures from developments standards are necessary in order to allow the proposed sign to be placed in the SF 7200 zoned location of Ingraham High School.

Conditioning:

The School Departure Advisory Committee recommended approval of the requested sign-related departures with two conditions designed to limit the impacts of the proposed sign.

1. Messages placed on the sign shall be limited to those that are intrinsically related to the mission of the school, or to non-profit events of broad-based interest to the local community.
2. Illumination of the sign shall conform to all existing or future School District and City of Seattle rules, policies or codes governing its operation.

FENCING HEIGHT DEPARTURE

Relationship to the Surrounding Areas:

(1) Appropriateness in relationship to the character and scale of the surrounding area

The existing character of the segment of Ashworth Ave. N. where the additional fencing is proposed is one of dichotomy between typical single family development on the west side and a full size baseball field on the east side. Bleachers are present in the low level (six to eight feet tall) movable form typical of baseball diamonds at high schools. The right field foul line is parallel and approximately 90 feet from the street pavement edge. The existing fence to which additional height is proposed to be added is approximately 60 feet from the pavement edge. Evergreen trees planted just west of the fence line are approximately 15 feet tall and are still a fraction of the mature height and width.

Given the existing character of the specific area in question, the developing screening vegetation already planted, the fairly generous setback distances and the limited extent of additional height in proportion to that of the existing fencing, the proposed additional fence height is appropriate in relationship to the character and scale of the surrounding area.

Presence of edges, significant setbacks, major arterials, topographic breaks, and similar features which provide a transition in scale – Height and scale will not be a difficult problem created by the proposed fencing. The fence is really a net, intended to retain foul balls on the school property. The netting will be virtually transparent as it would consist of nylon mesh panels above the existing link fencing.

(2) Location and design of structure to reduce the appearance of bulk

The additional height of fencing is proposed only in an area close to the home plate and batter box area where the additional height to screen foul balls away from the adjacent street and homes is most needed. It is designed as an integral extension of an existing fence. The netting is proposed to be a dark colored, plastic material with limited reflective properties. These measures will limit the appearance of bulk.

(3) Impacts on housing and open space

Little or no impact on open space is anticipated from the proposal. While the height of the fence will add somewhat to the negative impact the baseball facility already has on the single family area nearby, it will not threaten the existence of any housing. By making nearby residents and their property safer from errant baseballs the proposal would have a positive impact on nearby housing.

(4) Need for Departure

Testimony of neighbors to the Ingraham School site established a very strong need for the additional fence height to further limit the number of balls which currently leave the proposal site. At the meeting the need for similar fence screening along N. 130th St. was indicated and the Committee was asked to allow for the future installation of fencing of the same height along that street as well.

Recommendation: Fence Height

The School Departure Advisory Committee recommended that a development standard departure be granted to allow for installation of fencing of a height of up to 50 feet along both Ashworth Ave N. and, should the School District decide at a future date to install it, along N. 130th St. as well.

DECISION – ADDITIONAL FENCE HEIGHT

A development standard departure is granted to allow fencing of a height of up to 50 feet along both Ashworth Ave N. and, should the School District decide at a future date to install it, along N. 130th St. as well.

DECISION – SIGN RELATED DESIGN DEPARTURES

1. To allow a Changing Image sign in a Single Family Zone – **CONTITIONALLY GRANTED.**

CONDITIONS – SIGN RELATED DESIGN DEPARTURE

1. Messages placed on the sign shall be limited to those that are intrinsically related to the mission of the school, or to non-profit events of broad-based interest to the local community.
2. Illumination of the sign shall conform to all existing or future School District and City of Seattle rules, policies or codes governing its operation.

Signature: (signature on file)
Scott Kemp, Senior Land Use Planner
Department of Planning and Development

Date: May 4, 2006